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Message Text

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41
ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 AID-05

/077 W
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O 211015Z OCT 75
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7155
INFO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USUN NEW YORK 282

UNCLAS GABORONE 1428

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINS. BC RH

SUBJECT: RHODESIAN BORDER INCIDENT

1. THE FOLLOWING PRESS RELEASE WAS DISSEMINATED BY THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT ON OCTOBER 20.

QUOTE.

RHODESIAN TROOPS FIRE A SIC BOTSWANA VILLAGE

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT AT 5.45 P.M. ON SUNDAY 19 OCTOBER 1975 ABOUT 25 RHODESIAN SOLD-
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IERS, INCLUDING ONE AFRICAN, IN UNIFORM WERE SEEN NEAR MATSI-

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LOJE VILLAGE IN THE BED OF THE RAMOKGWEBANA RIVER WHICH IS
THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN BOTSWANA AND RHODESIA. THE SOLDIERS
OPENED FIRE ON THE VILLAGE AND CONTINUED FIRING FOR ABOUT HALF
AN HOUR. THREE SHOTS HIT THE VILLAGE CLINIC, A FURTHER SIX HIT
A TOILET NEAR THE CLINIC AND 32 SHOTS HIT A DAIRY. PEOPLE
LIVING IN THE VILLAGE ABANDONED THEIR HOUSES AND FLED TO THE BUSH.
TWENTY THREE VILLAGERS WENT IN A LORRY TO THE NEAREST POLICE
STATION IN FRANCISTOWNN WHICH IS ABOUT 56 KM WEST OF MATSILOJE,
TO REPORT THE MATTER. ON RECEIVING THE REPORT, THE POLICE
MOBILE UNIT RUSHED TO MATSILOJE BUT THE RHODESIAN SOLDIERS HAD
LEFT BEFORE THEIR ARRIVAL. THEY RECOVERED 87 EMPTY CARTRIDGE CA-
SES OF 7.62 CALIBRE IN THE RIVER BED.

THIS COWARDLY ATTACK BY THE RHODESIAN SOLDIERS ON UNARMED VILLAGERS
IS THE LATEST OF A SERIES OF VIOLATIONS OF THE TERRITORIAL
SOVEREIGNTY OF BOTSWANA BY THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES. IT
WILL BE RECALLED THAT ON 13 OCTOBER 1974 A RHODESIAN REFUGEE,
ETHAN DUBE, WAS KIDNAPPED BY RHODESIAN AGENTS IN FRANCISTOWN
AND TAKEN ACROSS THE BORDER NEAR MATSILOJE TO RHODESIA. ON 19
AUGUST 1975 MEMBERS OF THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES FIRED A
SHOT AT A GROUP OF BOTSWANA CHILDREN WHO WERE FETCHING WATER FROM
THE RAMOKGWEBANA RIVER NEAR MATSILOJE. ON TWO OCCASIONS DURING
AUGUST MEMBERS OF THE RHODESIAN SECURITY FORCES ENTERED BOTSWANA
WEST OF BOSOLI AND QUESTIONED BOTSWANA IN THE AREA ABOUT THE
ALLEGED PRESENCE OF FREEDOM FIGHTERS THERE. PAMPHLETS REGARDING
THE BORDER CURFEW REGULATIONS WERE ALSO DROPPED FROM AN AIRCRAFT
WELL WITHIN BOTSWANA BY THE RHODESIANS. ON 14 SEPTEMBER 1975 TWO
AMERICAN MERCENARIES, BELISARIO AND ACHESON, WERE ARRESTED AT
PALAPYE FOR BEING IN ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIRE ARMS. THEY
HAD ENTERED BOTSWANA FROM RHODESIA AND WERE CARRYING OUT A
MISSION FOR THE RHODESIAN SPECIAL BRANCH. THEY WERE INSTRUCTED
TO LOCATE SO-CALLED TERRORIST TRAINING CAMPS IN BOTSWANA AND RE-
PORT ON THEM TO THE RHODESIA, AUTHORITIES. THE ATTACK ON THE
BOTSWANA POLICE MOBILE UNIT CAMP AT KAZUNGULA ON 11 OCTOBER
1975 WAS CARRIED OUT BY PERSONS WHO HAD ENTERED BOTSWANA FROM
RHODESIA.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE BOTSWANA GOVERNMENT CAN ONLY ASSUME
THAT THESE UNPROVOKED ATTACKS, CULMINATING IN THE LATEST
DASTARDLY ATTACK ON PEACEFUL VILLAGERS, BY AGENTS OF THE ILLEGAL
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REGIME ARE A RESULT OF BOTSWANA S POLICY OF GIVING REFUGE TO
VICTIMS OF MURDER AND OPPRESSION IN RHODESIA. THE REGIME IS
PROPAGATING FALSE RUMOURS THAT TRAINING CAMPS FOR ZIMBABWE FREE-
DOM FIGHTERS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN BOTSWANA AS AN EXCUSE
FOR ITS AGGRESSIVE CONDUCT. THESE DESPERATE ACTS CLEARLY
DEMONSTRATE THAT THE REBEL REGIME HAS NO DESIRE TO CREATE A
CLIMATE FOR PEACEFUL CHANGE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. HOWEVER, IT
MUST BE CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD BY SMITH AND HIS SUPPORTERS THAT

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BOTSWANA WILL NOT INTIMIDATED INTO CHANGING ITS
POLICY REGARDING
REFUGEES FROM RHODESIA. END QUOTE.

2. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND COMMENT FOLLOWS SEPTEL.
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